



The Joint Standing Committee On Health and Human Services
Testimony from Ed Cervone, Executive Director, Educate Maine

In Support Of

L.D. 1772 "An Act To Secure Transitions to Economic Prosperity for Maine Families and Children"

L.D. 1774 "An Act To Reduce Child Poverty by Leveraging Investments so Families Can Thrive"

Tuesday, May 28, 2019

Senator Gratwick, Representative Hymanson, distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee I am Ed Cervone, Executive Director of Educate Maine, a business-led education advocacy organization. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of L.D. 1772 and 1774.

Educate Maine's mission is to ensure that Maine people are prepared to succeed in education and career pursuits and that all Maine people reach their highest educational potential. As a member of the MaineSpark coalition, we measure this by attainment - the share of adult workers with a postsecondary credential of value in demand by Maine employers. Maine's goal is to reach 60% by 2025.

If we are to reach this goal, we cannot leave anybody behind. Maine must look for ways to get more adults the training and supports they need to access good jobs and economic security. We support these bills because they do just that. These bills provide access to education and training, they provide the supports and services that allow adults to successfully complete their education and training, and they allow the time and incentive to reasonably move from assistance to financial security.

It is not enough to simply provide adults access to education and training. Our work has shown that they require a range of supports if they are to successfully complete and earn their credential of value. If we do not help them meet basic needs, like nutrition and childcare, they are unlikely to be successful. These are reasonable investments that generate a far greater return.

Adults and their families also need the ability to transition gradually to financial security without the fear of losing these important supports and services. "Cliffs" create perverse incentives that hold adults back from moving forward economically. One doesn't go from being economically disadvantaged to financially secure overnight. This takes time and is incremental. The phasing out of assistance should be incremental as well.

We believe that this comprehensive approach to addresses access, support completion, and help with transition to self-sustaining is the right investment. These approaches are in line with the research and best practices proven to help adult learners succeed. These approaches are aligned with the MaineSpark policy priorities. These approaches will help us reach the state's workforce goal of 60% of adults with a credential of value by 2025.

Thank you for considering this testimony.

Sincerely,

Ed Cervone
Executive Director